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Cambodia: The government is portraying the battle at Prek Tameak as a major victory.

The Cambodians say the action exemplifies Khmer courage and tenacity in the face of a stronger and better-equipped foe. A military spokesman emphasized that the achievement was made without significant outside assistance, although he acknowledged that limited South Vietnamese air and naval support was provided. The Cambodians also lowered their own initial casualty figures--from 60 to 19 killed--while claiming that more than 500 of the enemy were killed. The government, hard pressed to find something on the military side to brag about, has probably juggled the books.

Nonetheless, the battle could have a salutary effect upon Cambodian morale, especially following the humiliation of Kirirom and the presence of some enemy troops near Phnom Penh. [redacted]

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Thailand: The government is facing a revolt in the parliament although an immediate crisis has been averted.

A group of dissidents in the government's Saha Pracha Thai (SPT) party recently joined opposition members to hand Prime Minister Thanom a defeat in the second round of the fight over the new budget. As a result, opposition parliamentarians now have a one-vote majority on the 37-man committee responsible for reviewing and amending the 1971 budget, and they are in position to alter it considerably if they vote as a bloc.

In addition to becoming an important political issue in Bangkok, the budget has served to bring to the surface a widening rift within government ranks. Many members of the parliament, including members of the SPT, have been pressing Thanom for increased recognition and responsibilities, and for constitutional changes that will give the legislative branch more power. They are also urging Thanom to reshuffle the cabinet to make the government a more accurate reflection of current Thai political realities.

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South Vietnam: President Thieu's latest reshuffling of top army officers brings improved leadership to two of the important regional military commands.

General Lu Lan, who is being removed from command of the large Military Region 2 in the central part of South Vietnam, has been criticized by US and Vietnamese officers for his lack of aggressiveness and administrative ability, as well as for his corruption. Thieu has apparently shared this general view of Lu Lan for a long time, but the President, inherently cautious, had delayed moving against him until now.

Lu Lan's replacement, General Dzu, comes generally well recommended as a military commander, although even his ability and honesty have been questioned by a few senior South Vietnamese generals. Dzu reportedly has served effectively as commander of Military Region 4 in the Mekong Delta recently, and he has the added advantage of being a native of one of the provinces in MR-2. Dzu will face some difficult challenges, however, in trying to carry forward pacification in MR-2, where increased activities by Communist local forces and terrorists in recent months have stalled government programs in several key provinces.

The widely respected commander of the South Vietnamese 1st Division, General Truong, is now slated to take over Dzu's former command in the delta. Truong is a good choice for the delta job as he is a native of the area and the brightest light among the younger combat division commanders. He will be missed, however, in the heavily threatened northernmost provinces. Truong's 1st Division faces formidable opposition along the DMZ and Laos border and his replacement, General Phu, is reported to be a promising commander, but is probably now facing the most serious test of his career.

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Thieu has thus succeeded in getting rid of the worst of the previous regional commanders, General Lu Lan, improved the top leadership in MR-2 and MR-4, and promoted a deserving division commander in the process. Such changes of regional commands always have political overtones in South Vietnam and the new appointees, presumably loyal to Thieu personally, can be expected to support his policies in their areas. The primary motive for the command shifts, however, probably is Thieu's desire to improve the South Vietnamese military and pacification efforts.

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NOTE

USSR - Eastern Europe: The brief communiqué issued yesterday on the Warsaw Pact summit meeting held in Moscow on 20 August contained the expected endorsement of the Soviet - West German treaty. It also pledged that unspecified measures would be taken "in the nearest future" to implement proposals for a conference on European security. The formal talks between the Communist leaders lasted only a few hours, which suggests the Soviets had little difficulty in rallying their allies. The East Germans, who have serious reservations about the bloc's response to Bonn's Ostpolitik, probably were brought into line in their preliminary discussions with the Soviets.

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